

The 72 Gilbert Street House Museum

20 Years of Accidental Archaeology in Cambridge NY
with Historical Notes



Created and Written by Stephan Deibel
2024-2025

Preface

I've always been fascinated by who and what came before me, and spend perhaps too much time looking for clues and trying to understand what life was like in the past, and how it changed over time. During our almost 20 years here at 72 Gilbert Street, from 2006 to 2025, we had plenty of opportunities to unearth and reveal such clues. These we collected and stored in rows of buckets and boxes until in 2024 I decided to put it all together for others to see and hopefully enjoy.



The 72 Gilbert Street museum is the result of that effort. It houses many of the artifacts that we found, in a form that is storable and relatively compact when not on display. My hope is that it will remain with the house for a long time, perhaps even be added to by future owners. I'm sure there's a lot more out there just waiting to be found.

Having put all this together, I do feel that it does a decent job of telling the story of the house, revealing aspects of its history and the life of the people that lived here in the past.

This document contains what details I know about the artifacts in the museum, as well as also some general information about the history of the property and surrounding area.

This is very much a work in progress. More artifacts can turn up at any time, and there are plenty of things that could use more research. Where time didn't permit more investigation, I've included some educated guesses and speculation, but have tried to clearly indicate when I did so.

I apologize for not including references, as in a scholarly work. I did try to verify the correctness of everything I wrote but did not have the time to track down every reference for knowledge that I had stored away from my reading over the years.



Table of Contents

Exhibits Overview	4
Exhibit Details and Notes	6
Additional Historical Notes	61



Exhibits Overview

The museum is almost all mounted on 24x32 inch panels made into boxes that stack and can be stored when not on display, in order to keep them dust-free and protected from degradation through exposure to light, air, spiders, etc.

Each panel is labeled with a name on the outside and top left corner of the edge visible when on display.

Some of the panels are marked KEEP DRY and must be stored in a dry place, like the attic or house interior and not a basement or barn. Humidity will destroy their contents (mostly paper). We've kept the other parts in the barn because some are heavy and the barn is the best place to lay them out for display. I'd recommend putting them out just when there are people to see them, and otherwise keeping them stacked.

The sides of the panels were made out of antique scrap wood we inherited with the property, and in part out of fragments of the upstairs barn floor that were removed to make the opening where the stairs are now located.



There are also a few artifacts that were too large to mount. These are denoted as "Loose" in the descriptions below.

List of Exhibits

The exhibits in the museum are as follows, listed in suggested order of display, with the page number for details for each exhibit:

Panel: Prehistory + Oddities	6
Loose Artifact: Possible Native American Grinding Stone/Pestle	12
Panel: Ceramic + Glass - KEEP DRY	13
Loose in Box: Intact Bottles, Glass, Tobacco Tin, and Croquet Ball	17
Panel: Every Day Life	18
Panel: Other Paper Artifacts - KEEP DRY	20
Panel: Bones	22
Panel: 1952 Newspapers from Privy - KEEP DRY	23
Panel: 1955 Newspaper from Privy - KEEP DRY	24
Panel: Newspaper Fragments + Privy - KEEP DRY	25
Panel: 19th Century Hardware	27
Panel: Farming	28
Loose Artifact: Leading Edge Plow Blade	32
Loose Artifact: Modern Plow Blade	33
Loose Artifacts: Unidentified Machine Parts	34
Loose Artifacts: Cast Iron Belt-Driven Machinery Wheel	35
Panel: Horses + Tack	36
Panel: Agricultural Equipment Instruction Manuals #1 - KEEP DRY	37
Panel: Agricultural Equipment Instruction Manuals #2 - KEEP DRY	40
Panel: Tools + Plumbing	43
Loose Artifact: Hand-Whittled Tool Handle	46
Loose Artifact: Wheel Barrow Grass Seeder	47
Loose Artifacts: Two Lead Pipes	48
Loose Artifact: Horse Weather Vane	49
Panel: Early Electrical, Automotive, Etc	50
Panel: Photos and Maps - KEEP DRY	52
Panel: Nails by Location + Window Glass by Type + Wallpaper - KEEP DRY	55
Loose Artifact: Cross Section of 181 Year Old Sugar Maple	57
Panel: Color Fragments	58
Loose Artifacts: Blue Drawer and Grey Coat Rack Molding	60

Exhibit Details and Notes

Panel: Prehistory + Oddities



The exact purpose of some of the stone tools is in part speculative. I did not ever find time to consult an expert. They are:

The **large knife** was found in the vegetable garden. It probably dates from about 1500 BC to 500 BC but would need an expert to be certain. It may once have had an extension at the broad end and would have been hafted into a

wooden, bone, or antler handle similar to this one:



The **arrow head** was found under the large barn floor. This one also most closely matches arrow heads from about 1500 BC to 500 BC. It appears to be intact so I couldn't help but wonder how long its previous owner looked for it. This is how it would have been hafted into the arrow:



The **possible fragment of a hide scraper or small adze** is missing the blade that would have been formed on the broken off part at the top, parallel to the board it is mounted on. It is certainly either a deliberately formed tool that has been broken, or a piece of flint that was being broken up to create smaller tools. If it is an adze, as I suspect, it would have been hafted to a handle like this:



This panel also includes three speculative example tools, including a **small scraper** that might have been held between fingers, for tasks like detail work in hide scraping, a **small knife** that would also have been held between thumb and forefinger for cutting leather, meat, or shaping wood, and a **drill bit or awl** that might have been hafted into a wooden handle or a drill mechanism like the provided reproduction:



Also included here are **other flint fragments**. Some of these may in fact be small blades. Others are flakes produced during tool making. The large piece is a chunk that would have been broken up to make smaller tools. It and many of the other fragments and tools here are Normanskill Chert, which was traded up from Greene county and surrounding areas, possibly from the large stone age flint quarry in Athens, NY.

The two **possible Native American pottery fragments** were found over several years in the vegetable garden. They may also be early colonial. Years ago I saw what I remember as Iroquois pre-contact pottery that was incised decoratively like these fragments, possibly in the New York State Museum in Albany, but I have been unable to find those examples now so am uncertain whether I am right about this.

Throughout the property, digging often turned up what appears to be **partially fossilized bones**, some more identifiable than others. Their age and origin is uncertain, but some may predate European settlement here.

We didn't open very many walls in the house, but we always seemed to find something of interest there, including these **bat and bird skeletons** and some **honey comb from bees**. These likely ended up here during times when there were holes in the siding, before the vinyl siding was installed. In fact there was an active honey bee colony in the house when we moved here in 2006, and also a colony of the not-very-imaginatively-named "big brown bat" (*Eptesicus fuscus*). The bats were removed and prevented from re-entry by a bat removal specialist. The bees eventually moved on of their own accord.

When we dug over the large barn floor in preparation for laying brick, we found several holes, each containing specific items. Those in this panel include **fragments of an odd plaster construction made with buttons and a marble**, and also a number of **broken small glass bottles coated with residue** of whatever they contained. These may have contained veterinary medicine or a poison of some kind, hence their burial here. Since we don't know what they contained, I'd advise against touching them without carefully washing hands afterward.

This panel also includes other oddities we uncovered over time:

In the vegetable garden, we found relatively near each other over the years **a bit of coral**, presumably collected by someone who then lost it here. Nearby also a **fragment of a seashell** that resembles the chest and breasts of a young

woman, very possibly also a “treasure”. This area also yielded toy **marbles** (one of which is kaolin clay) and a piece of **slate that appears to have been deliberately notched into a “knife”**. It is possible this area was at one time frequented by playing children.

The striking **1980s era plastic Egyptian cat** was found near the front door.

During work in the master bedroom, one of the baseboards was removed and we were surprised to find this **lead sinker** behind it. Presumably it fell into a hole that is no longer there.

The **white pipe stem** was also found in the vegetable garden. This was part of a kaolin pipe that would have started about 18-22 inches long, with a formed bowl for smoking tobacco. The user would break off the end of the pipe periodically if it became clogged. These were in use starting in the 18th century, but also may date from the 19th century. The fact that the garden is near the 1760 house on the corner of East Main and Gilbert Streets might indicated it could be on the older end of that range. It is the only one we ever found here. This is what a complete pipe would have looked like:



The **12K gold plated ring** was found in the area where the large barn stood, before it was removed in 1974. It once had a ruby or garnet and other stones in it and was completely flattened when we found it. We opened it to see if there are any initials, but there is nothing other than an indication that it is 12 karat gold filled (plated) and not solid gold.

The **brass medallion** was found under the barn floor. It may have been part of an oil lamp.

The **one-hole button** may be walrus or elephant ivory. It would have been fastened by making a large knot in the thread with which it was sewn on. This

may be fairly old, and was found in the vegetable garden, and thus not far from the 1760 house on the corner.

Some of our accidental archaeological finds came from very unexpected places. The **small stone** in the plastic box on this panel was found inside the sugar maple tree we had to remove from next to the driveway after it died due to use of rock salt by the previous owner (sugar maples are extremely sensitive to salt). We had the tree cut into lumber and the saw mill hit this stone, which was pushed into a 1" bored hole. This would have been from tapping the tree for maple syrup using a wooden spile, rather than the more modern and much smaller metal ones. From counting rings, it appears this hole was drilled and the stone placed there in the 1920's. It may have been put there deliberately to protect the tree after the spile was removed. The type of spile that would have been in use with a hole this size looked like this:



A few other mildly odd finds are included here, although in hindsight they're mostly uninteresting: A natural **chalk-like stone** unlike others common here that I thought at first was significant; a **notched stone** that is probably natural and not a net sinker or weight as I thought at first; an oddly **lobed stone**, also natural; a **fragment of marble**, probably a piece of the original steps of the house, like those we found and incorporated as low benches around the patio; a

tear-shaped red stone that is likely just an inclusion from a brick; a **bit of pine pitch**, perhaps partially converted to amber; a **tiny smooth stone** that may have been worked and used in jewelry; and two pieces of **coal slag** that contain mostly iron, are magnetic, and look like they might be meteorites but, for the record, *definitely* aren't.

Loose Artifact: Possible Native American Grinding Stone/Pestle



This stone was found while digging holes for trees in the orchard. The pattern of wear on the one side might indicate that it was used by Native Americans as a pestle stone to grind corn. No mortar stone, which would have been quite a bit larger, was found. This could be pure fancy on my part, but the location of its find does place it in an area near or within the pre-contact settlement described later.

Panel: Ceramic + Glass - KEEP DRY



The range of ceramic and glass fragments we found give us some nice glimpses into what life was like here in the 19th and early 20th century.

Beige and blue salt glaze pots and urns were used to store pickles and other foods and drink. The best and only piece with text that we found, however, is part of a chicken feeder. It is labeled "OVERALL The Park & Pollard Company, Boston, Trademark," depicting a chicken which is only partly visible on this fragment. It was found in the patio area, which being visible from the house would have been a good place for a chicken coop. This is what it looked like when still intact:



We found a number of caches containing an individual item in a dug hole in the dirt floor in the barn, as we were digging it over to prepare it for laying brick. One of those was a **white glass globe with floral pattern** painted in green and purple. This would have been used as a shade on an oil lamp. It may be that it was accidentally broken in the house and the perpetrator buried it in the barn to avoid getting caught. It otherwise does not make much sense to find it in this context, in an area that was otherwise used for farming.

The **crystal vase** in the top right was another such item, with its own hole in the same area of the barn floor.

Over the years, we found a somewhat astonishing array of **fragments of other crystal items**. These show that farmers in the 19th century were far from poor. Once the railroad had come to town, providing better access to markets, the farm seems to have thrived. This continued at least up until agriculture started to be mechanized, which once again worsened the lot of the farmer because manufacturers of farm equipment and creditors began to take a larger share of a

farm's profits than used to be consumed by relatively cheap farm labor. This process has continued over the past century. These days, very few farmers could afford to build themselves a house the size of this one, nor would they have much money left over for displays of status and wealth like those indicated in the 19th century by fine china and crystal.

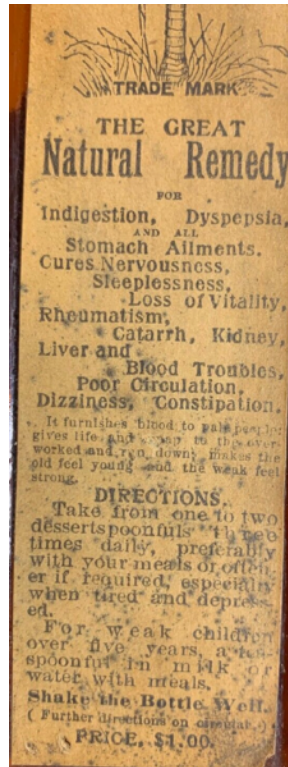
Some of the finds are of course more utilitarian, like the **canning jar fragments** in the lower left.

The **milk of magnesia bottle** (for constipation) tells us that despite being farmers, diets were perhaps not always that healthy, or possibly that dehydration wasn't uncommon.

There are also a few fragments here that appear to be parts of **wine or champagne bottles**. We found relatively few of those, but perhaps champagne was used on special occasions.

The brown fragment on in lower right quadrant is part of a **Munyon Paw-Paw patent medicine bottle**. This was made circa 1903 in Palm Beach FL and was quite popular at the time as a remedy for just about everything. As essentially a high-proof liquor, it was in reality often used just as a way to drink alcohol despite the wide-spread temperance movements of the 19th century. Paw-paw in this case is papaya and not the local paw-paw, like those we planted down by the stream. There is a modern version available since 2022: <https://munyonspawpaw.com/our-recipe/>

The original paper label said "THE GREAT Natural Remedy FOR Indigestion, Dyspepsia, AND ALL Stomach Ailments, Cures Nervousness, Sleeplessness, Loss of Vitality, Rheumatism, Catarrh, Kidney, Liver, and Blood Troubles, Poor Circulation, Dizziness, Constipation. It furnishes blood to pale people, gives life and pep to the over-worked and run down, makes the old feel young, and the weak feel strong. DIRECTIONS. Take from one to two dessert spoonfuls three times daily, preferably with your meals or oftener if required, especially when tired and depressed. For weak children over five years a teaspoon full in milk or water with meals. Shake the Bottle Well. (Further directions on circular) PRICE \$1.00." This is what an intact bottle and the labels looked like:



The **porcelain cup with man and woman** was found in pieces over three separate years, eventually reuniting the couple. It was found down by the stream in the small forested area, where there is erosion due to water flowing during flood times, so it's not certain if it's really associated with this house or the one on furnace lane. It could be either, since the stream was no doubt used as a dumping ground in the 19th century. I still look there every year to see if I can find more of the cup, but never have.

One thing that is certainly evident from this panel is what a wonderful range of colors glass used to come in, even for every day items like canning jars.

Loose in Box: Intact Bottles, Glass, Tobacco Tin, and Croquet Ball



These **small bottles** were found around the barns and down by the stream. They are mostly medicine or patent medicine bottles, some probably veterinary. The blue one is labeled and contained milk of magnesia tablets to treat constipation.

The **small drinking glass** may have been for juice at breakfast.

We found two of this brand of **pipe tobacco tin**. The other one is in the *Everyday Life* panel, where I've mislabeled it as being for chewing tobacco.

Also here is a **wooden croquet ball**, with remnant of green paint. It was probably used with the croquet wickets also in the panel *Everyday Life*.

Panel: Every Day Life



These items were found mostly in or near the barns. Remarkably, some cloth items were preserved beneath the old barn floor, and some leather items survived burial under the dirt floor in the barn.

The **jug** is likely for hard cider, although these were also used for vinegar and high proof liquor. It has a fragment of a metal chain still wrapped around its handle.

The **large lid** caught my eye as a possibly early example of this type of closure. The lettering says "Turn to Open" as if instructions are needed.

The **metal handle** is from a typical enamel coffee mug used mostly in the first half of the 20th century.

The **heavy cast iron metal disk** is labeled as coming from an L.F. & C. nut butter grinder, which was not something I expected to have been in use here. It dates from the 1890's or 1910's and may have been for making peanut butter.

The **metal tin** (misabeled on the panel as chewing tobacco) is one of two Edgeworth Extra High Grade Sliced Pipe Tobacco tins that we found. The inside of the top says "To the Consumers of High-Grade Tobacco. We desire to call your special attention to EDGEWORTH TOBACCO. It is the best combination that can be made, only finest selections of the leaf being used. Every box of it is guaranteed not to burn the tongue and to give satisfaction. We will cheerfully refund money to any dissatisfied purchaser. LARUS & BRO CO - Richmond Va. American Can Co 50A"

The **cloth bag** once held salt. The text says Purity Brand, International Sale Company Inc, Scranton PA, Net Weight 8 Lbs.

The fragment of **cotton canvas** is of uncertain age or purpose, and was found inside the large barn.

The **fragments of early panty hose** were found buried in the barn. This may have been yet another example of hiding items in a cache, along with others shown in the *Prehistory and Oddities* and *Glass and Ceramics* panels.

The **twist-knob style door bell** was found out in the cellar hole in the field. It was presumably once the doorbell for the house, although we don't know if it was on the front door or a side or back door used for deliveries. This probably dates from the first two decades of the 20th century.

The **boot-scraper** was also found in the cellar hole, and no doubt was once in use at the house. It is probably mid 19th century.

Also included are several **fragments of oil lamps**, including part of a cast iron lamp scone or body, brass bushing, and brass support for the glass chimney (the slot is for the wick).

The panel also includes several fragments of hardware that was probably part of furniture, including a **brass ring** that may have been a handle, a **cast iron drawer handle**, an unusually heavy and large **decorative iron tack** of uncertain purpose, a small **nickel plated ring** that was clearly worn down, possibly through use in chaining up a dog, a small **ceramic knob** mounted to a cast iron bar, and a **small brass drawer pull**.

The **old pair of scissors** were found during construction of the greenhouse, and probably date from between 1890 and 1920.

To the right of the scissors, the nicely **decorative cast iron piece** may have been a drawer pull.

We found quite a few leather fragments, including an intact **shoe sole** and associated **strips of leather**, and other fragments of uncertain purpose.

A set of **croquet wickets** were found in the tack room along with the accompanying loose wooden croquet ball.

The **toy ball** may have been for a dog.

The small **fragment of a fishing pole** was found in the vegetable garden.

Panel: Other Paper Artifacts - KEEP DRY



We found a few paper items here and there, mostly in the tack room.

One is a beautiful **art nouveau style calendar**, probably from the 1930s, depicting two young fishermen with a fish that they have caught. This might have appealed locally because this area is so famous for trout fishing. However, at that time the stream was dammed, often full of cattle, and probably not very attractive for trout or fishermen.

We also found the **head of a child's paper doll**, a type of very economical doll that was popular from the Victorian era through the 1950s. This one may be 1930s or 40s.

A torn **folio from Cloverleaf Milk** in Troy N.Y. may show us where the farm was selling its milk in the 1940s or 1950s. The phone number was simply 3382, although you had to ask an operator to connect you to Troy first.

Another **calendar from 1942** with humorous depiction of a camping man cooking up a pancake, unaware that he is being watched closely by a hungry bear. This one came from Bell & Costello Chevrolet and Studebaker in Cambridge N.Y, which may have been located where the Stewarts is now, or in the building (believe it or not) where the bookstore is now located. No address is given but the phone number is 88! This may indicate that the farm had purchased a car from this dealership in 1942. The tear-off section is still on January so, like many such calendars, it was never used.

Panel: Bones



It's hard to dig a hole here without finding bones, mostly evidence of what previous residents ate. Some of the bones on this panel may be mislabeled, but it's mostly correct. None are human; we did have a doctor look them over.

Pork seems to have been a large part of their diet, and by number found it is close to half. Poultry including chickens and duck were also common, with many more found than were included here. Beef appears not to have been consumed often here, perhaps since the focus was on dairy and steers or older dairy cows were sold off for butchering off-site. Wild animals were also represented, including deer which in some cases also appear to have been butchered and eaten, and also all manner of smaller animals like rats, cats, mice, rabbits, and wood chuck. We did not include most of the wild animal bones and skulls that were found.

Many of the pork and chicken bones were found under the old barn floor, now replaced by a replica floor that forms the stage. This might indicate that the bones were given to cats, or could indicate rat activity.

Panel: 1952 Newspapers from Privy - KEEP DRY

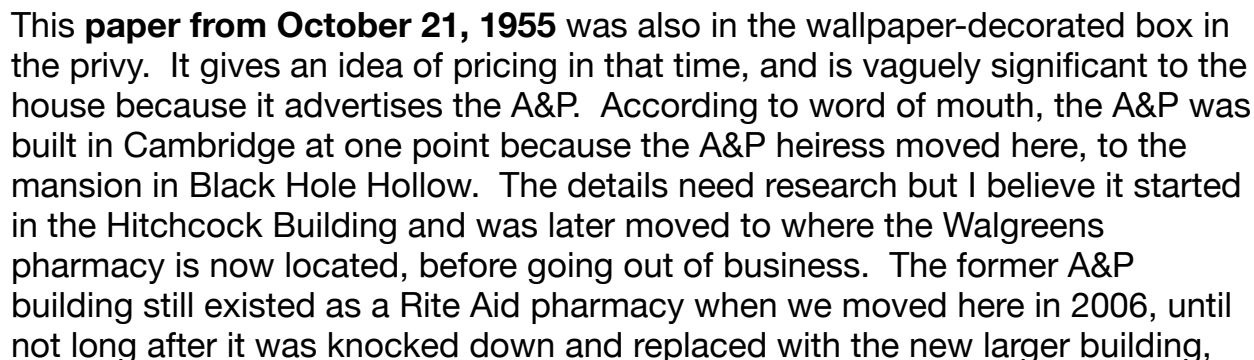


The interior privy, once accessible from the kitchen by hallway from a door that was located where the fridge is now, has a wall-papered box in which we found newspapers and a small amount of old fashioned toilet paper.

The **July 12, 1952 newspaper** was delivered to Mrs. Silvia Joslin, Rd 1, Cambridge NY. Part of it is missing, which seems to indicate that even after 1952 the privy was still sometimes in use.

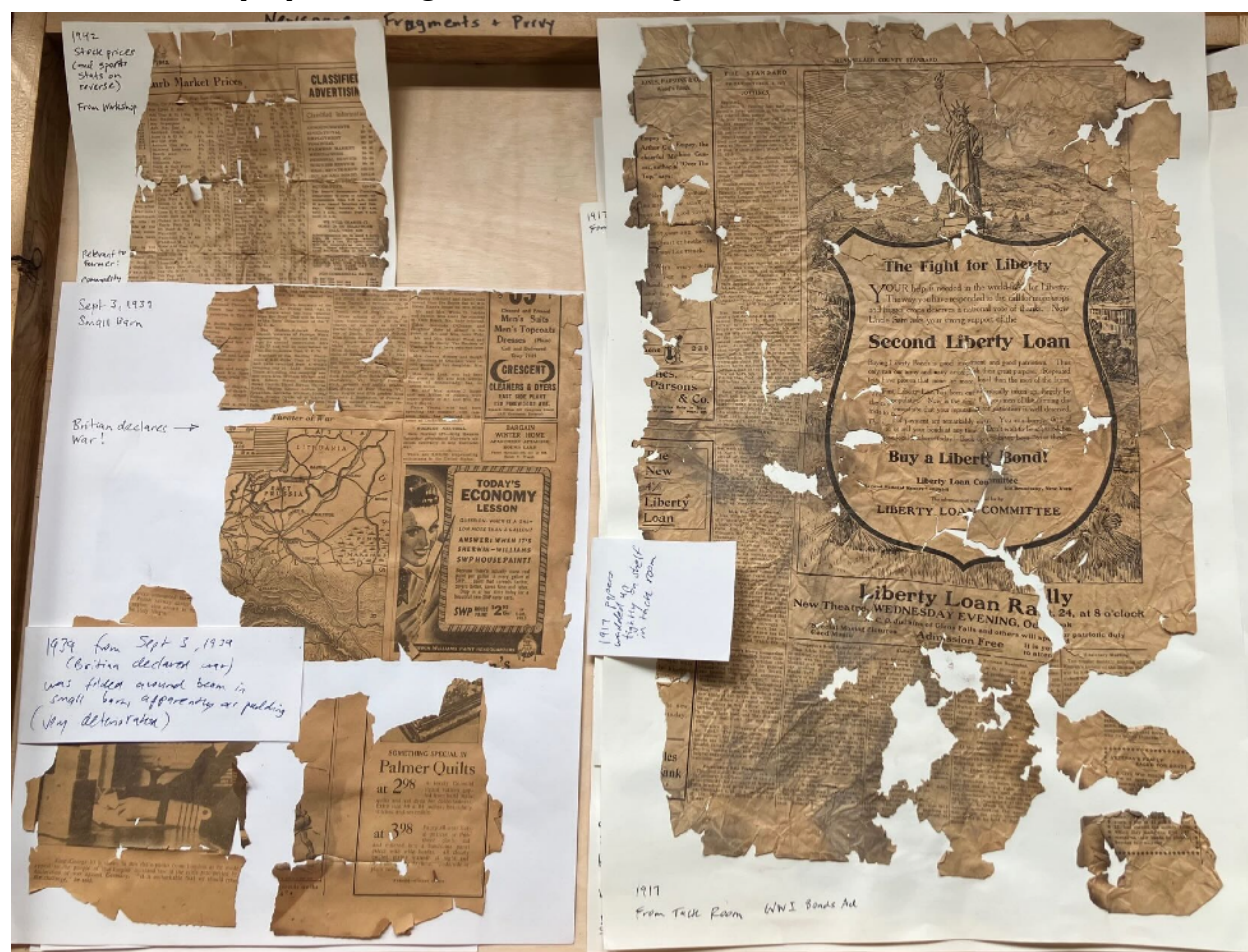
This panel also includes a **paper from April 21, 1952**. What makes this particular paper remarkable is that it includes a society column that reports "Mrs. Foster Geelan and Mrs. Stanley McLenithan were in Troy Tuesday." This is very likely Grace McLenithan, who together with her husband Stanley purchased this property later from the Joslins. Word of mouth has it that they owned it for a long time until about 1986, with their ownership starting some time after 1952

Panel: 1955 Newspaper from Privy - KEEP DRY



now Walgreens. At the time locals referred to that new construction as “Fort Rite Aid” because of its ridiculous design, a result of their corporate design team failing spectacularly at trying to make a store front that looks compatible with 19th century village architecture.

Panel: Newspaper Fragments + Privy - KEEP DRY



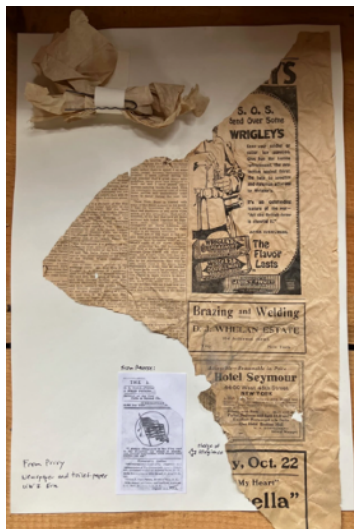
This panel contains many other newspaper fragments, too numerous to mount individually. Handle with care!

The **1917 newspapers** were found tightly wadded up in the tack room. The fact that these survived 100 years in this space is amazing. Some of them are clearly rodent damaged. We carefully steamed them open and ironed them, so they could be displayed. They include interesting ads for fashion items including corsets, which were still in use at that time. There are also ads for tires, kitchen stoves, floor products, classified ads, and appeals to purchase liberty bonds to fund WW I, which was in progress then. There is also a part of the

front page of the Washington County Post, which was a newspaper published in Cambridge and nearby from about 1798 through 1990. The newspaper printing office was the building on the corner of Pearl and West Main Streets, now home to a consignment shop.

Also included here is a **paper from September 3, 1939**, which happens to be the day that Britain declared war on Germany in WW II. It was found folded around one of the beams at the back of the small barn, and is very degraded as a result. We sprayed it with an archival de-acidification spray, in an attempt to prolong its remaining life.

The **fragment of a paper from 1942** was found tightly folded up in the workshop. One side contains stock and commodity price quotes, and the other sport statistics. At least commodity pricing would have been relevant to a farmer. It's otherwise unclear why this particular page was kept, perhaps just as a shim.



This panel also contains another **fragment of WW I era newspaper**, this one from the privy. The visible side contains an ad for Wriggly's gum, as a remedy for thirst for soldiers fighting in the war, proof that corporate ads have always been shameless and stupid. This page happens to contain the earlier version of the pledge of allegiance on its reverse side: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands. One Nation Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." This is before they added the "under god" part and interestingly its just "my flag" and not "the Flag of the United States of America." This fragment of newspaper, since it came from the privy, is mounted on paper with a **bit of old fashioned toilet paper** and a **bobby pin**, both also found in the privy's wallpapered box.

Panel: 19th Century Hardware



We found a great deal of often very beautiful hand-wrought 19th century hardware around the property, most of it near the barns. This included:

A **barn door hinge** that was found behind the large barn with several others, and probably was from fold-down section of the back wall above this point, which was used to load loose hay into the hay loft.

Other large hinges may have been for gates. The second one down was found about half way between the house and large vegetable garden, right about where there might have been a gate in a fence from the time when there was a roadway north of the house, extending from Gilbert Street out into the field and over to the cellar hole area.

The **bent over nails** in the top left were found around the barn and are a result of them being driven through boards that were attached to each other, and then hammering the protruding end of the nail over. The most common use of this type of construction was in doors, as was done in the replica doors we built, and examples of this type of construction can still be seen in some of the older doors that remain or that have been stored upstairs in the barn after being replaced by replicas.

Fragment of a black bladed sword

Wheel Hoe Blade

Belt Buckle from stretched conveyor chain

Brand: H. 508119

Sharpening Stone

For hanging animals after slaughter while butchering

Shells used to line fields

Page 28 of 77

outermost post that now holds up the wooden wall, showing somewhat unsurprisingly that there was once a fence extending out from the corner of the barn here. Black locust is extremely rot resistant. Only the portion well below the ground was preserved, which indicates that this one may be very old, possibly dating from as far back as the early 19th century. We don't know for certain when the barn was constructed, but it may, like the core of the house, date from around 1810 or 1820. Incidentally, black locust still grows on the property in the corner near the factory and was harvested and used for the perimeter fence, and also sawn into lumber for use in construction of the greenhouse and the dividing wall next to the sunken garden, where this fragment was found.

This panel includes a **collection of bent metal wire**, found over time mostly around the barn. Some were hand-made hooks, others may have fastened something together, all somewhat hastily made temporary solutions to some mundane problem. They were all twisted by now long-dead former residents, something I found somehow poignant and felt I needed to include in this display.

The **large piece of cast iron metal** may have been part of a large vessel, that would have been used to dip slaughtered hogs into boiling water before butchering them. The **sharpened hook** was likely used to hang up the carcasses during butchering.

The **wire with metal links** was on a nail on the wall in the large barn. These came from a conveyer belt chain probably used for handling hay bales or in a manure spreader. These belts stretch over time, necessitating removal of a link once in a while. They were presumably kept in case they would be needed later to replace a damaged link. Here are two examples, one a modern hay conveyer and the other a horse-drawn New Idea manure spreader, possibly like the one for which we have an identification tag on the panel Farm Equipment Instruction Manuals #2:



We did not find a lot of **barbed wire** on the property, although it was certainly used as evidenced by the fragment included here.

Parts of farm machinery turned up often, like these unidentified examples and others too large to mount. One that we left in the ground, because it was too difficult to remove, is an old sickle bar mower blade about 6 feet long. It still rests about 1 foot down below the bricks at the bottom of the stairs we added in the large barn for easier access to the hay loft.

The **small plow blade** came from a manually pushed wheel hoe. These would have been used to cultivate the rows in a vegetable garden. I bought one to use during my early gardening days here, but found it more cumbersome than a stirrup hoe or simply weeding by hand. This is what it would have looked like:



The **“HJ” livestock brand** was found under the dirt floor in the tack room, which we dug over at one point simply to check for artifacts. The last name Joslin was associated with the property from the late 19th century well into the 20th century, but we don’t know of an “H” specifically. It may be this was the father of E.A. Joslin.

The **large fragment of a sharpening stone** would have been for a scythe. Scythes used for cutting hay and grain need to be sharpened every 5-10 minutes, using a stone that is kept in a small reservoir of water. This stone broke in half and was discarded. It would have looked like this originally:



The **smaller fragment of a sharpening stone** may be just another design for sharpening a scythe or sickle, or for sharpening other tools.

It is unclear if the **coarse sand stone** was used for sharpening, but it may have been used to work rough edges. It is unlike any other stone we ever found on the property, and so was included here.

A very common find around the property is **whole and partial quahog clam shells**. These may have been consumed by residents after the railroad came to town around 1850 and longer-distance shipment of seafood on ice became possible. However, shells were also used in bulk and spread onto the fields as a way to reduce the pH of the soil, something that is critical to do once in a while in most agricultural fields. Today farmers spread lime instead.

For completeness we included two fragments of **very old corn cobs**, found under the original barn floor, and a few other bits of metal of unknown purpose, including a **sheet metal end cap** labeled with an “M” and other items found in the barn that we presumed to be parts of agricultural equipment or tools.

Loose Artifact: Leading Edge Plow Blade



This fragment of the **leading edge of a horse-drawn plow blade** was found in the stream and may have been made in the Lovejoy factory here. I originally thought the smaller side was broken and the reason it was discarded, but it may also have been part of the design, with the larger blade extending along the longer side, as in this illustration showing a different model of plow that would have been made here in the factory:



Loose Artifact: Modern Plow Blade



This larger and more modern plow blade was found while digging post holes for the perimeter fence. It might have fallen off the plow and remained buried. I've not been able to identify what type of plow it came from, but would guess it is from the 1960s or 1970s.

Loose Artifacts: Unidentified Machine Parts



These **parts of a machine** were found down by the stream. They probably were in the stream at one point, as evidenced by the small stones that are stuck into them. It is unclear whether they were equipment from the factory that washed down stream, or part of some farm equipment that was serviced in place down by the stream. One person has suggested to me that they may have been part of a coal feeding mechanism on a steam-powered tractor or equipment in the factory.

Loose Artifacts: Cast Iron Belt-Driven Machinery Wheel



This heavy cast iron wheel was in the barn when we purchased the house. It is a drive wheel for belt-driven machinery, but I've not been able to identify exactly what it belonged to. I suspect its heavy weight is due to it doubling as a fly wheel, to keep the belt moving more evenly.

Panel: Horses + Tack

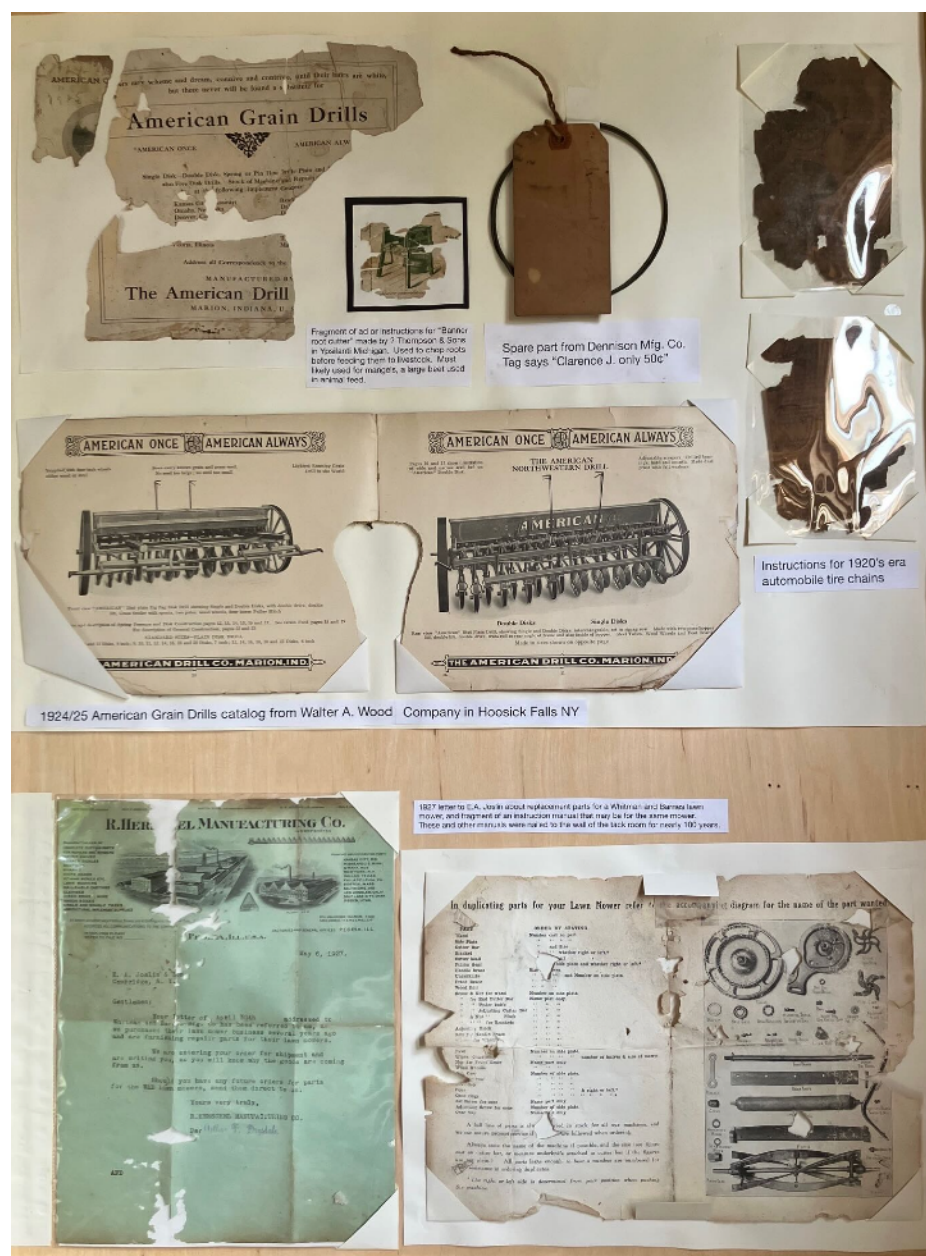


This land was worked by animal power for most of its time as a farm. We found evidence of this in the form of many **horse shoes**, **horse shoe nails**, and **fragments of harnesses** that were used for plowing and pulling wagons.

Most of the leather fragments were found buried beneath the floor in the large barn, and these appear to date to the end of the 19th century or early 20th century.

The **intact leather bridle** is newer, perhaps 1930's or 1940's. It was found buried under the floor in the tack room, and was the reason for the name of that area of the house.

Panel: Agricultural Equipment Instruction Manuals #1 - KEEP DRY



This is the first of two panels with instruction manuals and other paper documentation for agricultural and other equipment. All of these came from the tack room, where they were nailed to the wall, presumably by one or more of the Joslin family members. The instruction manuals indicate without much doubt the exact make and model of the equipment that was used on the farm here.

The **fragment of an American Grain Drills flyer** (or possibly the cover of a manual that is otherwise lost) is for a tool that would have been used to plant seeds for grain crops.

There is a small fragment of an **ad or instructions for a Banner Root Cutter**, which would have been used to chop roots before feeding them to livestock. This was usually used to cut mangels, which are a large type of beet grown for livestock feed. Banner made cutters also for poultry but this one seems to be for larger livestock. It would have looked something like this:



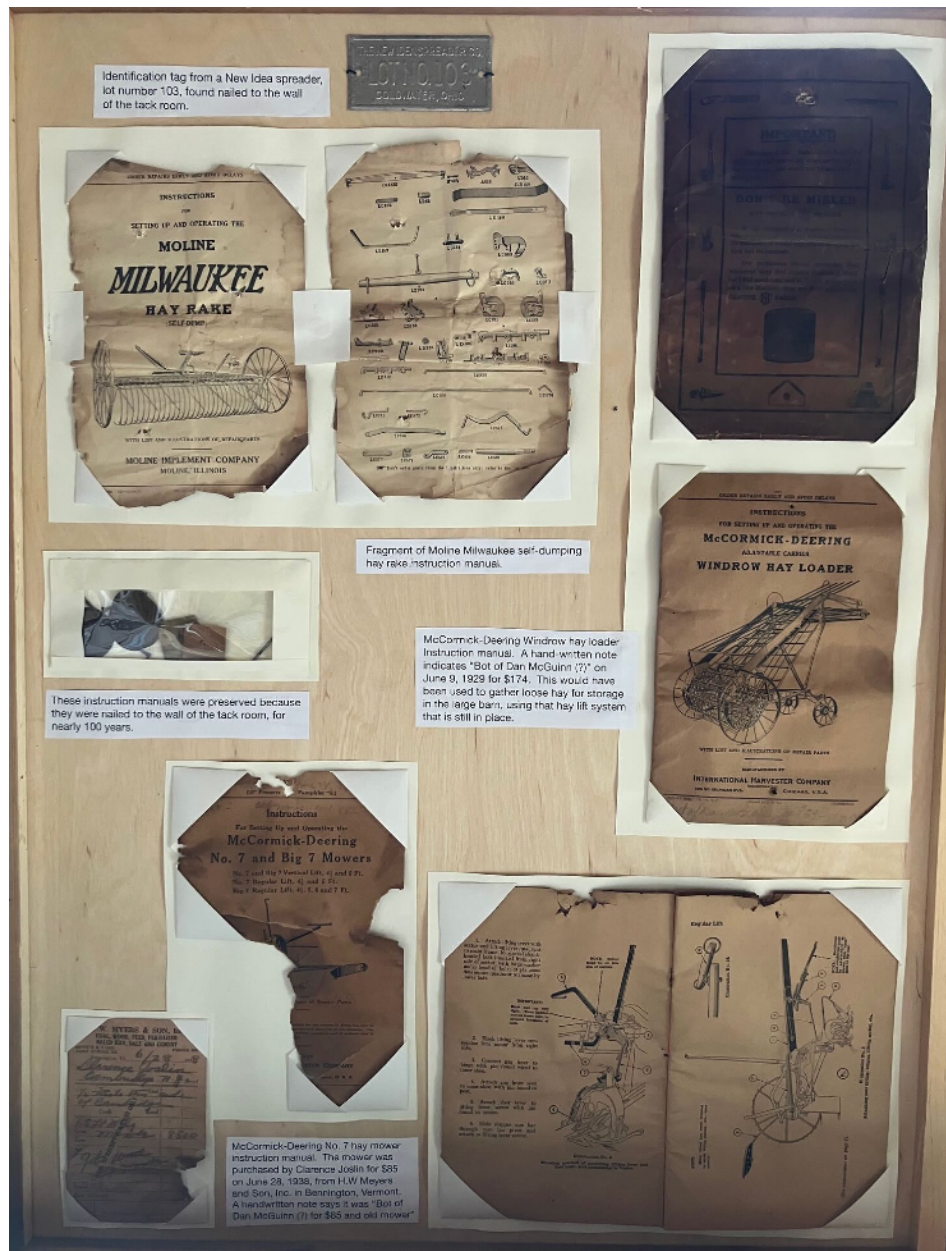
A **piece of braided wire with tag** is apparently a spare part for some piece of equipment that is long gone. The tag says it's for "Clarence J only 50 cents." and thus seems to have been set aside at the store for Clarence Joslin but then never used. The tag is from Dennison Mfg. Co, a company that made the tag and has nothing to do with the part. Dennison was located in Framingham MA from 1897 to 1990 when it merged with Avery, which still exists. They manufactured boxes and later labels, which is presumably why they merged with the Avery label company. The braided wire may be a replacement throttle or clutch cable from an early lawn mower.

Two oil-soaked and extremely degraded pages of **instructions for 1920's era automobile tire chains** could conceivably have been used on the 1921 Maxwell motor car for which we found an ignition key (see the *Automotive and Early Electrical* panel).

The **1924/1925 catalog for American Grain Drills** was from the Walter A Wood Company in Hoosick Falls. The Wood company eventually sold over a million pieces of agricultural equipment, and was a big part of why Hoosick Falls was such a prosperous place back in the 19th and early 20th century.

A **May 6, 1927 letter from the R. Herschell manufacturing company** in response to a letter sent by E.A Joslin (possibly Clarence's father) to an unspecified different company that had presumably been bought out by R Herschell, about replacement parts for a lawn mower. This was found with a fragment of an owners manual for an early lawn mower, showing a parts diagram, so that may be the mower in question. As noted elsewhere, the house had a very large lawn when we purchased it, now much reduced. These artifacts, including also the long green 19th century wheelbarrow-mounted grass seeder, seem to indicate that the expansive manicured lawn may have predated us by considerably longer than we thought at first. It is one part of the house's history that we have failed to preserve, but with the benefit of having created a much better habitat for plants and wildlife of all types.

Panel: Agricultural Equipment Instruction Manuals #2 - KEEP DRY



The items on this second panel of manuals for agricultural equipment were also found in the tack room, some nailed to the wall using the washers and nails included with this panel, but then apparently never again used. We removed them for preservation nearly 100 years later. All of these are associated with cutting, windrowing, and collecting hay that was presumably at least in part loaded into the large barn's hay loft as loose hay, for consumption by the four draft horses that were housed here. All of this equipment would likely still have been horse drawn, although tractors were starting to make an appearance.

The identification **tag for a New Idea No. 103 manure spreader** is for a tool that which was used to spread the manure from cows and horses back onto the fields, as a fertilizer. They are still in wide-spread use today, lending a certain “dairy air” ambience to the area, usually in the late winter. More research is needed to find this specific model. It may have been like this horse-drawn example, or perhaps a later model:



The instruction manual for a **Moline Wilwaukee self-dumping hay rake** is for a tool that was used to gather the hay into windrows, so that it could be raked up into a wagon. Here's a very similar model:



The instruction manual for a **McCormick-Deering windrow hay loader** is for a complex tool that was used to collect and load hay into a wagon after it had been raked up into rows with the above self-dumping hay rake. There is a handwritten note “Bot [bought] of Dan McGuinn [?] on June 9, 1929 for \$174” that was written by Clarence Joslin. Here is a similar model from the same time period:



The instruction manual for a **McCormick-Deering No. 7 hay mower** included a receipt that shows the mower was purchased by Clarence Joslin for \$85 on June 28, 1938 from H.W. Meyers and Sons, Inc in Bennington VT. A handwritten note on the manual's front cover says “Bot [bought] of Dan McGuinn [?] for \$85 and old mower.” This is that tool looked like:



This and the previous item seem to indicate that Clarence Joslin was working the land from at least 1929 through 1938 and was probably responsible for preservation of most of the materials in this and the previous panel, by nailing them to the wall in the tack room. Thank you, Clarence!

Panel: Tools + Plumbing



We found relatively few tools, possibly because they were valuable and not often mislaid or broken. **Broken tool handles** were, however, fairly common. One **beautifully preserved hammer** came from within the south wall of the large barn, found while replacing some of the siding in the area where there is also interior siding. It's owner must have been scratching his head after walling it in 70 or more years ago.

The very **rusty and somewhat ungainly shears** were found under the ground in the large barn. It is unclear what they were used for, and I'm even a bit skeptical they are all the parts are from one tool, although they were all found together.

The well-used and **broken cold chisel** was from the work shop.

The **broken cast iron wrench** and **very rusty hex wrench**, both found in the large barn, may have been for an early automobile or tractor. Early automobiles, tractors, and other farm equipment often came with some custom tools needed to service them.

We also found a **leather punch** in the barn, probably used for making holes in leather when adjusting or repairing draft animal harnesses. The large barn was shelter for four draft horses, as is described in more detail below.

The **broken pinch point pry bar** was likely used to aid in digging, such as for fence posts. Our own digging for posts for the perimeter fence also required one. The hammer marks on the ends of the smaller piece are evidence of me reusing the found tool, before I got the idea of the museum, and are not original. The tool originally would have looked like this:



Some of these tools should perhaps have been in the *Farming* panel, but we ran out of room there. This includes the **fragments of a hay rake**, which were found in the large barn. They are beautifully hand-made, maybe even on site. It is possible these were used with the loose hand-whittled tool handle described below. Because they differ in appearance to other hay rakes I've been able to find, it is possible they had some other purpose.

We also found a fair amount of what appears to be **metal stock**, some of it perhaps used in iron working or repairing equipment. There may have been a small forge here at some point, or they may just be from horse shoe making and equipment repair. Some of the metal stock may be misidentified here and could actually be parts of tools or equipment.

Some of the metal bits are tin. These may be **fragments of tin artifacts**, in one case clearly melted in a fire. They serve as a reminder that it is almost certain that repair of tin pans and vessels took place here, often as performed by an itinerant tinsmith who would travel around the countryside looking for business.

The **box of rivets** may also have been for repairing tin objects. It is labeled "Judson L Thomson Mfg. Co. Waltham Ma. U.S. America - Thomson Slotted Clinch-Rivet - (100 Assorted) - Rivets in these metal boxes do not tarnish or rust from moisture or atmosphere nor from perspiration as all others do when carried in the pocket."

The **fragment of leather with nail** included here is similar to several others we found, some still attached to the wall in areas where they may have served as a place to store tools.

Three gutter supports and a **hinged nickel-plated downspout support** give us some hints about the type of guttering that once existed here. An important reason for having gutters was to guide water from the roof into the large cistern that still exists in the cellar below the kitchen. The **brass spigot and lead pipe** here extended through the wall from the cistern to behind the area where the furnace is now. The cloth tied around it may have been there to prevent condensation, or perhaps to reduce wear to the soft lead pipe when filling buckets. The kitchen very likely also had a hand pump with a pipe extending down into the cistern, so water could be drawn up directly without needing to walk down to the basement. The larger lead loose pipe described below may have been part of that.

Other **smaller lead pipes** were found under the floor in the barn. The wide-spread use of lead in pipes tells us that former residents and perhaps also their livestock very likely suffered from lead poisoning, particularly since rain is somewhat acidic and would have dissolved some of the lead as water flowed through the pipes.

During installation of the radon fan, we found half a **cast iron bushing** that tells us that there used to be an earlier driven point well here, before the current one. Very likely the old one was drawn up and replaced with the new one, rather than driving a new point from scratch into the soil.

The **fragment of gasket** is of uncertain purpose, but may have been part of the gutter plumbing system. It was found near the house.

Loose Artifact: Hand-Whittled Tool Handle



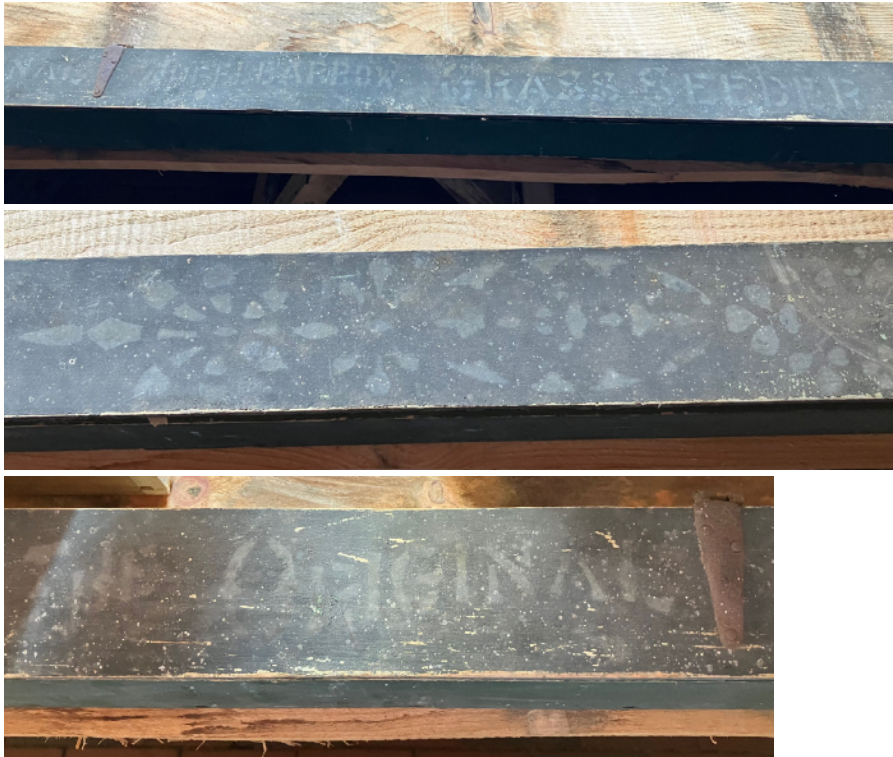
This beautifully **hand made tool handle** was in the tack room when we purchased the house. It was whittled from a sapling. From the flattened area near the end, it can be identified as very likely being the handle of a hay rake like this one:



It is possible this handle was used with the hand-made tines on the *Tools + Plumbing* panel. It may be early 19th century, before the railroad made it easier

to obtain factory-made rakes. Or, it may have been hand made simply to save some money. Work like that was often done in the winter months.

Loose Artifact: Wheel Barrow Grass Seeder



This grass seeder, a “Thompson’s Original Wheel Barrow Grass Seeder No. 6” was the only thing that came with the house that could vaguely be called agricultural equipment. It’s continued presence here was likely due to its use in reseeding the lawn periodically. It may also have been used to frost seed clover into the field, as a green manure.



The hand-written note on the instructions inside it says “No 5 will sow peck of grass seed or more” (although this one is actually model No. 6).

Loose Artifacts: Two Lead Pipes



These two other lead pipes were part of an earlier plumbing system in the house, more evidence that former residents almost certainly suffered from lead poisoning.

The **thicker lead pipe** has hand made perforations at one end, which indicates that it was submerged into a vessel or cistern to allow pumping water up by hand pump. This may have been in use in the kitchen, to pump water up from the cistern below. It matches the pipe that extended out of the cistern into the adjacent basement (see panel *Tools + Plumbing*), so may also have been part of that. There's no direct evidence a kitchen pump existed, since the old kitchen was long gone when we purchased the house and the ceiling in the basement is covered with insulation, but pumps like that were standard equipment and the likely reason that the cistern is under the kitchen.

The **angled pipe with spigot** has an adapter that converts to a smaller lead pipe. I don't have a record of where this one was found.

Loose Artifact: Horse Weather Vane



This weather vane was on the lightning rod at the front of the large barn. For some years after we moved here in 2006, it did a reasonable job of indicating the wind direction. We repaired it several times with bondo and paint, and finally removed it in 2025, after it had flopped over and again ceased to function due to further deterioration.

Panel: Early Electrical, Automotive, Etc



At least the barns had an **early knob and tube style electrical system**. The items on this panel were all from the large barn and the area around the patio. We never found any evidence that the house also had this type of wiring, but it may have.

We also found some items from the early days of automobiles. The most interesting of these is a **#163 ignition key from a circa 1921 Maxwell Motor Company automobile**, found while excavating the large barn floor. This car was made by an early car company based in North Tarrytown, NY. It merged with Chrysler around 1921, and production of Maxwell cars was phased out around 1925.

The other key was also found in the barn, and is probably a **key for a tractor**.

The **Rajah spark plug** is probably also early 20th century and was found down by the stream.

Also included here are what appears to be **automotive lamps**, another somewhat **newer spark plug**, and what appears to be a **distributor cap**. From wear on its contacts, it looks like it was used, but could perhaps also have been one that was manufactured in the Lovejoy factory during its HE Ignition days (see *Cambridge Plow Factory* below for details).

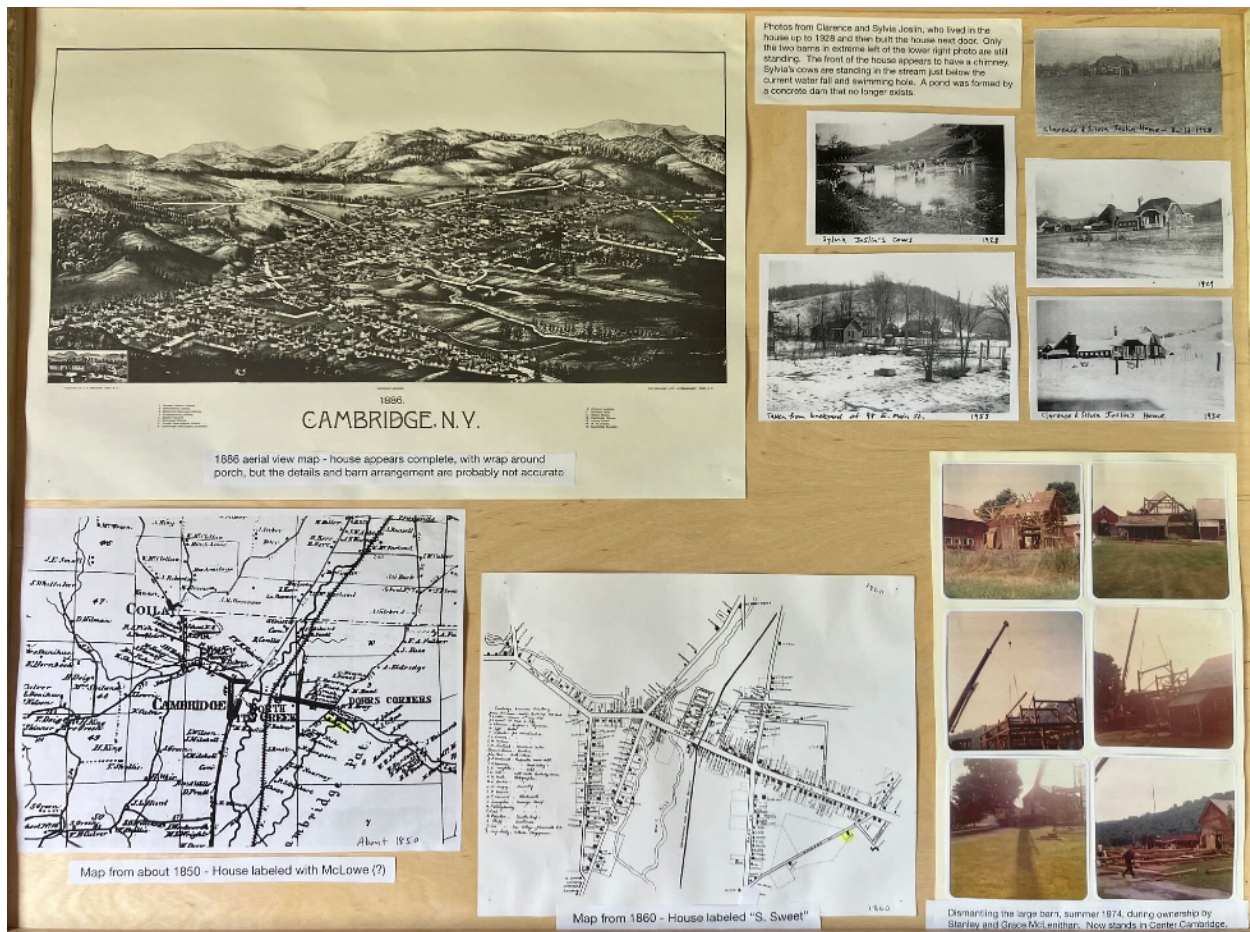
Several license plates were found under ground in the tack room, mostly in very poor condition. The top one is from 1937, and the other one is marked "New York World's Fair 1939".

The house was at least during some of its history heated by coal, as evidenced by the large amounts of **coal** found on and under the ground in the tack room, and to some extent by artifacts that appear to be fragments of parts of coal burning stoves, including a **stove grate**, fragments of **ceramic fire box liner**, a small **part of a stove door**, and what may be a **handle for rotating a damper**. Some of these items may be misidentified, for example the handle may be from agricultural equipment.

We know from the house that there were likely wood stoves, at least at the back of the house in the area that is now the guest room and would have been the kitchen at the time. The living room floor has a now-covered perforation that is lined with charred bricks, which seems to indicate that there was a furnace in the basement, with hot chimney pipes, rather than water or steam radiators, extending through the living space. This would have been a very strange and dangerous system, possibly motivated by easy access to the basement from the back door and a desire to keep the messy coal or other fuel out of the living space. It does not look like it was in use very long, but the charred bricks remain under the floor as evidence of its existence.

This panel also includes a very small part of the **20th century trash** we removed from the property, as a reminder of how dismal future archaeologists' lives are likely going to be. This included a **section of copper pipe** that had been cut out after being damaged from freezing. We know from word of mouth that the house froze at least once during the time it was owned by Robillard, two owners before us, resulting in complete replacement of the radiator and plumbing system. This fragment could also easily have come from replacement of outside hose connections which, before installation of better valves for winterizing, froze often during our time here.

Panel: Photos and Maps - KEEP DRY



A **map from around 1850** labels the house with an owners name that is hard to read but looks like *McLowe*. The map indicates that this house is on land that was part of the Cambridge Patent, which was the original chunk of land granted to European settlers around 1750. Note that this map labels this area as Dorrs Corners and there are almost no houses in the village. That was because the railroad, which is shown on the map, had just been built and the core of the current village had not yet formed. What is the village center now was entirely rural and labeled North White Creek. At that time, Coila was larger than the western part of the village, also still very rural. Passage between these ends of the current village was difficult because there was a swamp around where the Rice Seed Company factory was later built on land fill. This area is still wet, as evidenced by the presence of soft maples. Some sources indicate that there was rivalry between the two ends of the village as it formed, and that filling in the swamp was part of that, or at least involved some controversy as a result of the conflict. It isn't entirely surprising that two formerly separate villages might have come into conflict over real estate and control of the businesses that

appeared during the period of rapid development around 1850, after the railroad was built.

The **map from 1860** shows just the house, labeled with owner name S. Sweet. By this time furnace lane exists and the factory had been built, also a result of the construction of the railroad. There were just two houses on Gilbert Street, as was also the case a decade earlier. However, this maps shows that much of Main Street in the village now has houses, just a decade after the railroad was completed. The Rice Seed Factory, however, does not yet exist and it may be that the swamp in that area had not yet been filled in.

The **1886 aerial view map** would have been produced by an artist for sale to residents in the area. It shows the house at 72 Gilbert Street complete, with a wrap-around porch that no longer exists. Some details of the barn arrangement may be fanciful, although some of it matches what is known from later photos. In general there would have been a motivation to make the maps accurate to entice people into purchasing a copy.

We have only a few photos, some from 1928/29 showing some of the barns and the house next door, as built by Clarence and Sylvia Joslin in 1928.

In the **1929 photo**, the original large barn and silo are visible with milking or stall area on the right. There is also a barn behind the house, parallel and identical in size and shape to the part of the house that still exists and contains the workshop and privy. There is also the indistinct outline of another barn in the back yard, probably around where the round patio is now located. Considerable evidence that a building once stood there was found during construction of the patio and surrounding gardens. In fact much of the patio surface and some of the surrounding standing stones were found here, in what appeared to be an old paved floor. The remaining small and large barns that still stand today are also visible in this photo, sandwiched between the house and the original large barn with silo.

The **1930 photo** also shows the original large barn, silo, and adjacent stalls or milking parlor, which extend very close to the newly built house next door.

The **1953 photo** taken from East Main street also shows this large barn and silo, from a different angle. Notice that there are almost no trees on the hill behind the house and it was used for pasture at that time. The paths etched into the hillside by the cattle are sometimes still visible during the winter, after a light snow. Since this was before the vinyl siding, the house would still have had its

original Greek Revival styling, but it's too far away for this to be visible in the photo.

There is a **1928 photo of cows in the stream**, in a pond that was formed by a dam that no longer exists. For some time after we purchased the property, remnants of a pipe that once crossed the stream were still visible on both sides of the stream in an area that also contained some fragments of concrete. These may have indicated where that dam was once located. The pond seemed to have flooded the swimming hole and small waterfall that now exists, and there is no sign of the small forest that now stands next to the stream on the north east corner of the property.

Six photos from 1974 show various stages of dismantling the original large barn, silo, stall area or milking parlor, and other associated buildings. This must have marked the end of the property's use as a dairy farm. The large barn was newer than the one that still remains. After it was removed, it was reassembled and now stands in Center Cambridge, although I am not sure of the exact location.

Also kept in this panel (but loose for separate display next to it) is a **painting from the 1970's** that shows the original large barn, silo, and stall or milking parlor area. It was painted by one of the children of Mrs. Fuller, who lived next door until 2007. After she passed away, we were given the painting by her daughter, along with all the photos above. The apple trees on the hill are probably fanciful, misplaced, or at least self-seeded because that part of the hill is very steep.

Front Exterior

Library

Back Hall Floor

Living Room

Guest Room

Back Hall Trim

Shower

Cellar

Porch

Dining Room

Bath

Porch

Kitchen

Workshop

Trade Room

Privy

Ground Floor

Basement

Basement Duct

Workshop

Trade Room

Privy

Upstairs

Master Bedroom

Bath

all floor nails

Bedroom

Office

Attic

Crawl Space

Original House Basement

Basement

Root Cellar

Under Porch

Small Barn

Large Barn

Early Glass

Many of these nails are entirely hand made. Some were made partly by machine, using moulds or mechanical shaping devices. There are many types of nails, ranging from tiny delicately made **glazing nails** used to hold window panes in their wooden frame before they are glazed, **nails for finish work** and moulding, and fairly hefty **flooring nails**.

Page 55 of 77

the dining room, kitchen, and workshop, and finally the front part of the house that contains the master bedroom and library. The house appears to have been completed in its current form by 1886, omitting the current porches.

We did not keep track of where we found **window glass**. It came from all over the property, of course more often from near the house or barns. There are at least seven different types (one box each) as well other types that appear to be earlier, perhaps back into the early 1800's. This also has never been subject to any further research.

Also kept in this panel is a **notebook of wall paper fragments** that we found in the house. Most of them are 19th century or early 20th century at the latest. Some very old paper that is still up in the house can be seen inside the front hall closet. A sample of that could perhaps be added to this notebook if it is later removed or covered over. We've kept it in place as a reminder of the very long history of this house.



Loose Artifact: Cross Section of 181 Year Old Sugar Maple



This tree stood in the front yard until 2018 when it had nearly died of age and stress from the use of road salt, which sugar maples are very sensitive to. It was taken down by the power company in order to expand the electrical wires that go past the house, to service the new firehouse and expanded medical area. From counting the rings, we know that the tree sprouted in 1836, and thus stood here for most of the house's history. We've marked every 50 years and noted the civil war, WW I and WW II. The tree had too much internal damage to be used for lumber, but it did yield 4 cords of firewood!

Panel: Color Fragments



This panel includes **fragments of painted wood** and **linoleum** that we found in the house and barns, as a reference for some of the colors that were common in old farm houses.

Different shades of blue, yellow, green, and brown appear to have been commonly used in the house, during the 19th and early 20th century.

The most common paint is actually not represented on this panel, except possibly by the window pane moulding: White wash was made using hydrated lime, salt, and water or sometimes milk. This was painted onto ceilings, walls, and in some cases the interior of barns, although not in any of the barns that are still standing here. It is called "wash" in part because it was repainted

periodically, perhaps even yearly, to keep things looking fresh. In the house, during installation of the wood stove, we could see that the bottom of the upstairs floor boards and the beams were painted with white wash. Originally all the downstairs rooms in the old part of the house would have been separated from the upstairs only by floor boards. The exposed portion of the beams in the living room (not much more than 1/3 their height) still show residue of the white wash on them. Although it would be impressive to expose all of the beams, we know from having seen other houses that it's a good thing that they are covered over. The level of noise and dust that filters down when anyone walks upstairs would otherwise be quite unpleasant. Another use of white wash in the house was for the hallway that once extended from the kitchen, through a door behind where the fridge now stands, past the workshop, to the indoor privy. The portion of the hallway ceiling and wall that still exist are white from the last time they were repainted with white wash, perhaps a century ago.

Another very often used color was a rather dismal battle ship grey, represented here by the loose coat rack moulding, as described below. The interior basement door is still that grey color. It was also used in painting floors, which originally were all painted and not bare wood. Floors were installed while the lumber was still a bit damp. After drying, the cracks between the boards would widen and then were filled with horse hair plaster and painted, producing a smooth-looking floor. When we moved here, one such floor still existed in the back bedroom upstairs, with hand-painted white lines forming a diamond pattern. We unfortunately did not recognize it as original and had it sanded to natural wood. Inhabitants of the house from the 19th century would probably find the floors with their current polyurethaned exposed wood finish to look rather strange.

The **red linoleum** is probably from between 1930 and 1960. I am no longer certain where it was found, but probably in the kitchen under the dish washer.

Also included here is an **original cedar shingle** that was found in the wall between the living room and front hall. That would once have been the outside of the house, before construction of the front addition that now contains the library and master bedroom. This would have been hand-made by splitting it from cedar log and shaping it with a draw knife. It is quite resistant to rot, but its time in the weather is evident from the erosion of the exposed portion. The lichen on the shingle was on it when it was found, so must be about 150 years old. Lichen still forms on the roof, siding, and trees, and is a sign that the air here is relatively unpolluted.

Loose Artifacts: Blue Drawer and Grey Coat Rack Molding

This **blue drawer** found in the tack room may have come from the kitchen, providing a clue into the colors used there before the current kitchen was installed in the 1980s. The knobs are a recent addition. It is now used to store some of the loose artifacts that belong to the museum.



The **grey coat rack moulding** with its 19th century hand-wrought nails was found in the tack room. It may have been part of the kitchen as well, or perhaps came from the basement or other area, as a place to hang rags.



Additional Historical Notes

Core of House

The core of the house, possibly built as early as 1810 or 1820, includes the living room, back hall, guest room, bathroom, back stairs, and the two bedrooms above that. It was a typical four-room eyebrow window Greek Revival style farm house. There is one much like it that still stands without any additions about half way down East Main Street on the left side. There is a rectangle on the 1850 map (see *Photos and Maps* panel) right where that house stands, so it's likely that it was also built before most of the rest of the village existed.

Originally the room above the living room would have been the master bedroom, with eyebrow windows on both sides. Now only the windows on the north side remain.

When we moved here, the back bedroom (or office) floor was painted grey with a delicate diamond-shaped pattern in white. It was in such good shape that we thought this was something recently painted onto the floor, and we had it sanded along with all the other floors. Later we learned that it very likely was original, so that was a mistake in terms from a preservationist standpoint, particularly because of its excellent condition.

All the floors in the house are original, with the obvious exception of the linoleum in the kitchen and downstairs bathroom, the new area just outside the downstairs bathroom, and the replaced portion next to the front door. The dark color of those in the original house is not the result of stain, but simply the slow darkening of the wood over about 200 years. When we had them refinished, we assumed they would lighten up but they did not. This type of floor, this old and in this condition, is exceedingly rare. It survived in very good condition, perhaps a result of having been covered with wall to wall carpet for quite some time before we removed that in 2006.

The back stairs are the original stairs, although they were reworked by someone in the past 30-40 years by adding wider oak treads to make them less precarious. Originally the treads would also have been pine, would not have had a lip, and it would have felt a bit more like a ladder.

The room that is now the living room with wood stove was originally somewhat smaller; the location of the old wall can be seen on the floor, and this room was probably treated as a "best room" and rarely used. Most of life in the house would have taken place in the room that is now split up into guest room, back

hall, and bathroom. This would have been the kitchen and living area. This area might have been reconfigured several times. When we moved here the floor in the back hall was in very bad shape, and had a seam down the middle which was evidence that there was a wall there once. We replaced that part of the floor since it had become unsafe. The amount of wear to it and also the floor in the guest room (which is still the original) indicates that there was a lot of traffic in this area, and it was probably where the cooking took place. Some burn marks on the floor in the guest room might indicate the location of wood stoves over time. It's hard to picture what all this looked like.

It is possible the house originally had a stone 18th century style hearth system at the back. This would have been removed when wood stoves came into widespread use, and that might explain why the back of the house foundation is brick. We learned from an expert on historical masonry that this added brick wall is also the reason that the back of the house was lifted up a few inches long ago. Apparently that type of brick mortar would expand slowly over a decade or two after its installation. This accounts for the upward slope on the bathroom. Because the house is post-and-beam and the process was so slow, no harm was done to the structure. It showed no sign whatsoever of further motion during our 20 years here.

The original stairs into the basement went down from the guest room towards the now-unused door behind the washer. It's a bit unclear why there is a door there as well as the glass-paned one in the center, but it may be that the now-unused one was the entry into the house, and the glass-paned door was the entry into the basement. The width of the current basement door is consistent with probable use of the basement as a root cellar. The glass-paned door was probably reused from somewhere else in the house, possibly the old front door before additions were added. It is very old, as evidenced by the type of glass that was used. The current back door is also very old, and may have been the original back door of the house. We've often worried about this outer back door, due to its exposure to weather, but it has shown no sign of rotting in our 20 years here. It may be black locust.

Presumably the current stairs down to the basement were added when the back of the house was reconfigured and the room that is now the living room was enlarged somewhat. That was probably done at the time of adding some of the additions to the house, most likely the dining room and kitchen.

Additions

There were three major additions made to the house over time, probably all relatively soon after the railroad came to town in 1850. Before that time, the farm had to drive surplus produce to markets in Bennington, Troy, or Saratoga by ox or horse cart. After the railroad came to town, selling farm products became much easier and more profitable, so the farm prospered and the house grew.

The likely first addition is the dining room and kitchen, with the civil war era cistern underneath. The cistern was filled with water from the roof and there would have been a hand pump in the kitchen that made it possible to pump water up from it. When we purchased the house, there was also a spigot coming out of the wall behind the furnace, which allowed access to cistern water also from the basement. This is now in the house museum. The basement area under the kitchen and dining room is the coolest and dampest of the basements, and still works terrifically well as a root cellar. This was very likely by design. We were tempted at times to build a trap door and ladder down from the kitchen, since the basement is essentially like a refrigerator almost 3 seasons of the year. There's no evidence that one ever existed, so if it was indeed used as a root cellar it might have been accessed only through the current doors.

The kitchen once connected to what is now the workshop, via a stair of a few steps down within the kitchen space, where the fridge now stands. The bottom of the door was at the level of the workshop floor, about 2 feet below the kitchen floor. Evidence of this is still visible in the basement. The door opened into a white-washed hallway that led to the three-holer privy at the far end of the house. The location of the hall is still visible, but the boards on the one side have been removed so it is open to the workshop. As of the time of this writing, some of those boards are still in the upstairs of the barn, with other historical lumber we saved from the property.

The addition that contains the workshop, privy, and tack room was probably added fairly soon after the kitchen and dining room, but not at the same time. You may notice that the foundation around where the privy is located is brick and not stone, like the rest of the foundation. This wall was built with just a single layer of bricks so that it could be knocked down periodically and the privy cleaned out. We have evidence that the privy was used quite late in the 20th century, because there were newspapers in the toilet paper box dating from the mid 1950's. This was probably quite a while after the house had interior

bathrooms, but it may be an older member of the household preferred it, or it was used when the inside bathrooms were busy.

The last major addition to the house is the area with the library, front stairs, and master bedroom. This part of the house was built primarily for show. The room that is now the library would have replaced the current living room as the “best room,” and would only have been used for special guests like the local pastor, formal teas, and events like wedding and funerals. We were told by Pat McLenithan that his family never used the front of the house at all, not even the master bedroom, which is consistent with how these types of additions were often treated. Note that the shelves and mantle in the library are not original and were added by us around 2015.

The two porches are very probably 20th century additions, most likely starting with the back porch early in the century, and the glassed-in porch after that. According to drawings on old aerial view maps, there was originally a wrap-around porch around the entire front of the house, added presumably when that part of the house was built. It's possible this was a fabrication by the artist that drew the map, but in general these maps were kept as accurate as possible in order to entice home-owners throughout the village to purchase a copy. Like so many such porches, it likely rotted off the house and led to the construction of the current smaller and more self-contained porches. This would have considerably lightened up the interior of the house but also made it hotter in the summer sun. It's possible that removal of the wrap-around porches eventually led past owners to allow growth of more deciduous trees around the house, to help keep it cooler in the summer while still keeping it lighter in the winter.

All of these additions were Greek Revival in style, with false corner “columns”, as evidenced by the returns in the roof, still visible at the corners of the house. The wrap-around porch that no longer exists very possibly also had Greek Revival style columns, as can still be seen on other houses around the village. Most of the elements of that styling were obliterated when the vinyl siding was added in the early 1980's. We were told by a man that claimed to have been the installer that this was the first vinyl siding job in the village (and also his first). Later examples that can be seen in the village were done in a more sensitive way, by retaining and wrapping the Greek Revival styling, rather than just removing and covering it over. When we bought the house we thought we would restore the exterior styling using a more appropriate type of siding and adding more insulation in the process, but we found the house is already very well insulated and other projects took priority.

Large Barn

The large barn may be as old as the original core of the house, from about 1810 or 1820. It may very well have been built before the house itself, since there were other houses nearby and the barn would have been the first need for the family that started the farm here. It went through several configurations. Originally it seems to have had an interior wall running across a bit further back in the barn than the current wall. This interior wall was moved later and currently only partially exists, the original portion being on the right side, with the original ladder to the hay loft still attached to it. We rebuilt the rest of this wall, leaving the center open so the space can be used as a theater, and also added the stairs. Before that, the ladder was the only way up from the inside of the barn.

For most of its life, the large barn was used to shelter four work horses. The stall dividers have been removed, but the feed troughs are still intact. When we moved here, one divider was still in place, on the right side, and we used that stall for a while as the winter quarters for our chickens. Its location can be seen on the ceiling. The wood from this divider (probably American Chestnut) is now used as part of the floor, in the back center. The way all this worked was that loose hay from the upstairs could be thrown down through trap doors above each of the feed troughs. We covered over these trap doors with the new layer of pine flooring upstairs in the barn, but they are still there. Each trough contained the main area, which was filled with hay, and a smaller part what was used to feed grain. The remnants of the smaller inserts are still visible, to varying degrees.

The entire upper part of the east wall of the barn is hinged and could be opened. Wagons were filled with loose hay using the equipment for which we have instruction manuals in the house museum. These were then parked below the open hinged hay loading door, and the pulley system that is still in place was used with a large metal claw to bring the hay up into the loft. The hay loft would typically have been filled floor to ceiling, because loose hay took up a lot more space than baled hay. Unfortunately the hay-grabbing claw that was part of this system was gone when we purchased the house, but the pulley system and rope can still be seen. Some of the hinges in the museum were found under this large fold-down door. It appears they were replaced at some point in the 20th century with more modern machine-made hinges, in fact much later than I would have expected loose hay or even draft horses to still to be in use. I suspect that at that time baled hay was loaded into the hay loft using the conveyer belt for which we still have belt links in the house museum, and the door was still in use for that purpose without using the pulley system.

To access the stalls, the draft horses were brought in through the downstairs side door of the barn. When we moved here, the door was in such bad shape it couldn't be opened without falling apart, so we built a replica during our restoration of the barn. The large wooden latch system is however not something that was evident in the original door. It's just our own idea. During construction of the sunken garden next to the barn we found a flat stone under the soil below this side door, with clearly evident scarring from the horses' shoes. It is now part of the floor of the sunken garden and the marks are still evident.

When we moved here, the sill around most of the large barn was in very bad shape, including also severe rot in the lower part of many of the posts. We replaced the sill with layered pressure treated lumber bit by bit, jacking up and working around the posts. That approach was chosen since it led to a more durable sill and could be done by a single person without heavy equipment. Most of the posts could be kicked out easily in their entirety with a boot, to 1-2 feet above the ground. We were left wondering what was holding up the barn, but somehow it was still, then as now, in its very square and solid form.

Around 2020-21 we restored the rest of the barn. We started by cleaning it out and removing the remains of the original draft horse floor. We were told that this floor had been partially cut out by the Urbons to park their boat, unfortunately without saving any of the lumber. In order to install a new floor, we had to dig out 1-3 feet of composted horse manure that had filtered through the cracks in the floor over the years. Somewhat surprisingly, we found this century-old manure to still be quite high in nitrogen, and have been using it in the garden. We then reconstructed the floor to the original structural standard using some of the original tree beams and new sandwiched pressure treated beams where we didn't have historical material to use. The floor is covered with oak, some of which is Kentucky white oak that we had been given years earlier (the front portion), some of which is locally cut white oak (the left and right back portions), and the rest is from the remaining stall divider (center back portion).

We also rebuilt the wall that once divided the stall area from the rest of the barn, but we decided to leave it open so it can be used as a theatre. The left side wall is entirely new, although built in part from historical wood that came with the property or came out of the old black smith building behind Hubbard Hall, before it was demolished and the currently standing replica was built.

Before our restoration, the barn downstairs had only two small windows on the south and the two small windows above the feed troughs. The upstairs had only the two small ones below the eaves on the ends. All were in disastrous shape.

We rebuilt one of the windows on the south wall (the one closest to the door) and added the others. Upstairs, all the windows were added. Since this was during the pandemic, we opted to use materials we had on hand. The south-facing windows upstairs were once cabinet doors. The windows on the ends upstairs came out of the above-mentioned black smith shop. The windows downstairs were fabricated by hand.

All of the pine lumber used in the barn restoration was milled on the property out of a large pine tree that stood north of the house until 2018. It fell in a storm that took down hundreds of trees in the area, causing complete devastation in some parts of the village like the western part of Spring Street. Fortunately, the tree fell away from the house and we obtained an incredible amount of lumber from it. The two long banquet tables in the barn are also made out of this tree. The largest board we obtained from this tree was 30" wide and 14' long!

At this time we also added the brick paving in the "audience area" of the barn. Before that, the floor was dirt. We had to dig through all of that to remove large stones, and in the process found some interesting things that are now in the house museum, including an arrow head.

Small Barn

The small barn is much newer, dating probably from the early 20th century, possibly from the time that the family first acquired an automobile. We know from an ignition key found in the barn that they may have owned a circa 1921 Maxwell Motor Car Company auto. If this was their first car, perhaps the small barn was built to park it. It is of course also possible the key belonged to the veterinarian or any number of other people that might have come into the barn.

Other Barns

Some of the old aerial view maps I've seen (but don't own) show that there used to be many other barns here. In one I counted more than 25 other structures. Some of these might have been made up by the artist, but we know that farms typically had privies, smoke houses, grain storage buildings, chicken coops, and many other specialty structures.

The only other structures we know about for sure are visible in the photos in the house museum. One barn stood directly next to the workshop/privy addition, paralleling it on the west side, and looking like its twin. In that photo both of those are painted red, while now the remaining one is white to match the rest of the house. That almost identical second barn stood very close to the other,

which probably ultimately led to problems and its removal. The very large main barn that stood to the south of the existing large barn (and dwarfed it) and also associated structures and a silo can be seen in those photos as well. The silo stood in what is now lawn, about 50 feet southwest of the green house. Its circular shape is sometimes still visible.

We also know that there used to be a structure in the field. It is now just a cellar hole that was used as a sometimes dumping place for old axles, tires, and so forth, some of which are still there. An aerial photo I saw at one point online seemed to show that there was once a roadway extending from Gilbert Street just north of the house down through the back yard and over to that cellar hole. There is still a connection to the road there, with drain pipe under it. Next to the cellar hole there are also plants that seem to indicate there was once a flower garden here: Snow drops, day lilies, and white and purple Siberian iris, some of which we moved to the garden around the patio. From this I have guessed that the cellar hole might once have been the location of the milking parlor, and the roadway was for access by milk trucks. But this is speculation and we don't have any hard information about when this structure was removed, and what it was used for.

The Lawn

The lawn comes up a lot in anecdotal history of the house, and to some extent in artifacts that we have found. When we first moved here, the property had a large lawn that is now mostly gone. We decided to reduce it to save time on mowing and to improve wildlife habitat. We have observed a considerable increase in wildflowers and small wildlife over the years, so this seems to have worked, but we now know that we may have broken a long tradition of pride in the very large lawn that existed here.

The first evidence we have about the lawn is a May 6, 1927 letter to E.A. Joslin & Son about lawn mower replacement parts, and the associated fragment of a lawn mower instruction manual.

The sole piece of what might be called agricultural equipment that remained when we purchased the house is a beautiful green wheelbarrow-mounted grass seeder with stenciling that reads "Thompson's Original Wheel Barrow Grass Seeder". This is now in the house museum.

The lawn also came up in context of conversation with Pat McLenithan, a nephew of Grace McLenithan, who told us she was very particular about the

lawn. He and other family members were concerned enough to ask us “what’s with the lawn?”

I also remember Mrs. Urbon mowing the lawn when we looked at the house and it was brought up again at the closing that it needed care and constant mowing, advice we proceeded to ignore.

Thus it appears that there were at least 80 years of owners that took pride in the lawn, until we came along and ruined it by allowing areas to grow up into more natural meadows, and by planting gardens, shrubs, and trees.

History of Ownership

This is what we know, without ever having tried to research the chain of ownership via deed registry. Much of the details for the more recent owners is anecdotal and should be taken with a grain of salt:

Obviously, in the beginning there was no house here at all and the area was used at least some of the time by Native Americans. We know this from artifacts that we have found here, and from other evidence, as explained in *Notes on Native American Occupation of the Site* below.

Without much evidence other than the construction style of the oldest part of the house and the date of nearby settlement, I suspect the core of the house was built in about 1810 or 1820. It was one of the first two if not the first house on this section of road, so it is possible it was built by a *Gilbert*. If so, there are a couple buried in the graveyard just north of the traffic light in town whose dates might match. But this is speculation and would need more research to confirm or deny.

A map from 1850 labels the house with a barely legible name, probably *McLowe* (see the *Photos and Maps* panel).

A map from 1860 labels the house as belonging to *S. Sweet* (also on the *Photos and Maps* panel)

The “HJ” livestock brand on the *Farming* panel might be an *H. Joslin*. We don’t know how old the brand is, but we do know of other Joslins as follows:

The May 6, 1927 letter on the Agricultural Equipment Instructions Manuals #1 panel is addressed to *E.A. Joslin & Son*. This is so far the only mention of E.A. The son was probably Clarence.

We know that *Clarence and Silvia Joslin* were active here in 1938 from a McCormick Deering No 7 mower delivery receipt dated 6/28/1938. *Clarence J.* is also named on a tag on a length of braided wire, but the date of that is unknown. A hand-written note "Bot of Dan McGuinn" dated 6/6/1929 on a McCormick-Deering Windrow Hay Loader instruction manual matches the style of another similar "Bot Of" (meaning "bought from") note on the McCormick-Deering No 7 mower, and may indicate Clarence was already involved in 1929. According to a caption on a photo Clarence and Silvia built the house next door, probably a Sears kit house, in 1928. This might have been occupied by E.A. upon retirement, with Clarence and Silva moving there only much later, because Silvia Joslin's name is also on a 1952 newspaper from the privy. At any rate, it appears to have been Clarence who nailed many of the agricultural equipment instruction manuals and catalogs to the tack room wall, thus giving us a picture into the farm at that time.

Word of mouth tells us that *Stanley and Grace McLenithan* lived here for a long time, up to about 1986. We don't know exactly how long, but we do know that they did not yet live here in 1952. The 1952 newspaper from the privy, marked as delivered to *Silvia Joslin*, mentions *Mrs. Stanley McLenithan* in the society column. It seems most likely that presence of this newspaper indicates Clarence and Silvia were still living here at that time and Grace McLenithan, although already married, was living elsewhere. We know from surviving family members that Grace McLenithan's maiden name was *Herrington* (not *Joslin* as I suspected at first). We were told by her nephew Pat that she designed the 1980's era kitchen, with double ovens because she baked a lot of pies for fund-raisers. She was apparently very particular about the lawn and would watch (according to Pat "drink in hand") from the back porch while her nephews mowed. Stanley and Grace sold the house around 1986 after they had sold the land across the street and there were plans to put a supermarket there, which they didn't want to live across from. It was never built, but instead (eventually) houses, condos, and the medical area. Pat told us it was their best haying land and they should never had sold it. From photos we know that the dairy operation shut down before 1974, when the large barn and other barns were removed.

From word of mouth, we know of a *Robillard* purchasing from the McClenithans about 1986. He worked at GE in Schenectady and apparently purchased it as a weekend home and did a lot of renovations and restoration but then sold after his marriage ended around 1996. During his ownership, the oil ran out once in the winter because the oil company failed to deliver. As a result the furnace shut down and pipes were frozen, causing a lot of damage. That may be why there are remnants of what looks like another modern baseboard type heating system

visible in the basement. When Robillard sold, the remaining 40+ acres with the house were split up. As part of this he generously gave some land to the two adjacent houses, since they had borders right up to their house walls. The 22 acre hill portion and 10-12 acre other end of the field were also split off and sold separately. The hill went to Jason and Debra Blanchfield and the 10-12 acre other end of the field was purchased by the fire department as future home of their new firehouse. It took until 2023 before that was finally completed.

The owners that preceded us were the *Urbons*, who purchased the house around 1996 and lived here until 2006. They raised children here. Several people told us that they were not well liked because of one or a few incidents where they called the police on people swimming in the stream, which some people have asserted was a traditional swimming hole for much of the village. However, the 1928 photo of the stream suggests it may not have been a very nice place to swim during the time there were cows here, which lasted to around the early 1970s. There was a dam in place that created a muddy pond just downstream from where the small water fall and swimming hole are now located, and this appears to have flooded the waterfall so it wasn't visible. So the "tradition" may not have been very old, perhaps 20 years, but it is uncertain. The Urbons installed an above-ground pool and deck in the area that is now the patio. They may also have renovated the downstairs bathroom. They removed part of the original draft horse floor and wall in the large barn, we were told in order to park their boat. We don't know much else about them.

We the *Deibels* purchased the house in 2006 and raised a daughter here. We removed all the wall to wall carpets and refinished the original pine flooring. We changed from the giant lawn, apparently the pride of about 80 years of occupants before us, into more natural areas and gardens. We planted the orchard, vineyard areas, berries, nut trees, and other trees and shrubs around the house, by the stream, around the cellar hole in the field, and in the hedgerow. After some years of using and maintaining it, we replaced the above-ground pool with the round patio, added a sunken garden south of the large barn, built a grape arbor, and dug a small frog and wildlife pond north of the house. To keep deer out, we added perimeter fencing and gates and, due to rabbits and woodchucks, separately fenced vegetable garden areas. We added the old fashioned style pump in the yard north of the house, which is unfortunately not operable due to the driven point getting into a bank of clay (pulling it up 5-7 feet might yield a working well seasonally). In the large barn, we restored the floor area (now a stage), rebuilt part of the missing dividing wall, added stairs to the hay loft, added windows upstairs and downstairs, paved the dirt floor with brick, and converted it into theatre space. See above for details on this project. We built the green house, constructed almost entirely of black locust and pine that grew on the property. We added the wood stove and hearth

in the living room. We added shelves and a mantle piece to the “library” room. We replaced some of the in-the-way metal baseboards with more traditional looking radiators, that also happen to heat much more quickly. If we were staying here, we would make more of those! We added a whole-house dehumidifier and basement dehumidifiers with drain and pump to a pipe that leads to the frog pond. We replaced the furnace and water pump and added a treatment system to reduce the acidity of the water in the pipes. We built the wood shed by the fire pit and also the mini-barn that was once the pool pump house. We reworked the 1980’s kitchen by removing the overhead cabinets above the cooktop, repaired and refinished or painted those that remained, and installed modern appliances and a new sink. And we built this house museum. Phew. And then, as empty-nesters, we decided it was time to down-size.

Note on Native American Occupation of the Site

Aside from the stone tools and possible native American pottery we found in the garden, as shown in the *Prehistory and Oddities* panel, we also know from archaeological surveys done in 2020+, during preparation to build the new fire house, that the land behind the fire house and 72 Gilbert Street contains a pre-contact settlement. I was never able to see the records from the dig because they are not made available to the general public, but the file for the dig has “pre-contact site” in its name.

During the dig I inspected what was exposed and saw marked darkened areas of soil that were arranged into long oval shapes, very possibly the remains of post holes for long houses. I also saw what might have been several human burials. I was unable to look at those because they were tightly covered, so am just guessing based on their size and shape.

This apparent settlement site, as exposed at the time of the dig, clearly extended under the land that still belongs to the 72 Gilbert Street house, 2-4 feet down below the surface.

Proximity to this settlement and the very good quality of the soil here makes it likely that corn, beans, and squash were grown on it this land at least some of the time by native Americans, long before Europeans came to this continent.

It might be possible to obtain the details of this archaeological survey using the freedom of information act, but I have never tried it.

From historical records, we know that the land here was part of Mohican territory until around the time of European contact, after which it was taken over

by the Mohawk tribe of the Iroquois nation. The details of this pre-contact conflict are unclear, but may have played a role in how tribes chose sides in the French and Indian War and later in the American Revolution.

During the 1500s and 1600s, this area may have served more as a seasonal hunting area, possibly as a result of the dramatic depopulation that is known to have occurred after 90+% of the natives died of European diseases, often before ever seeing a white person.

There is other evidence that the Cambridge valley was quite a populated area in the time before European diseases arrived.

The “Indian Mound,” which is about 6 miles south of here on the land owned by Moses Farm in Eagle Bridge NY, is a strong clue that the valley was densely populated. It is a man-made long oval mound with flat top. Mounds like this are known all over New York State and west into Ohio and Kentucky, and this is a fine intact example that has never been excavated. Like the much larger mound at Ganondagan in Victor NY, which was once the center of the Iroquois nation, it would have been palisaded at its summit with sharpened tree trunks buried into the ground, and it may have been used seasonally to store corn and other foods. When the French destroyed the grain stores at Ganondagan with fire in 1687, it burned for several days and was estimated to contain 1.2 million bushels of grain. That mound is much larger and was based on modification of a natural hill. From my own inspection of it, with permission from the land owner, it seems that the mound in Eagle Bridge could have been built entirely by mounding up soil carried in pack baskets, although it is possible it also contains a smaller natural hill.

The area around the mound in Eagle Bridge would have been densely settled and intensively farmed. There are historical records of use of the area during early contact times as a meeting place, with a council fire and a meeting house on top of the mound.

The “Indian Ovens” nearby are also evidence of native American use of the area. These are naturally occurring white quartz mini-caves that show signs of use as a place for fires. They are located in the cliffs at the summit of the mountain to the south of Route 313 (same road as Gilbert Street) in Anaquassacook, just east of here. Soot in these white quartz mini-caves has been carbon dated to about 1400. They may have been used as signal lights. The area where these Indian Ovens are located is private land and the owner currently is not allowing people to visit them.

During my time living here I've encountered other tales that would support a theory of intensive Native American use of the area, even to the time of the arrival of Europeans. Most common is the assertion that "there were long houses all over the village". Others have asserted that there was a known ritual site with ochre pit off North Union Street. I can't assess whether any of this is true, but further research may confirm or discredit this oral history.

Slavery

We have no direct evidence that slaves worked the land but it is very likely that they did. Before this house was built, the land probably belonged to the 1760 house on the north west corner of East Main and Gilbert Street, or to some other house that was part of the Dorrs Corners settlement there. In addition to the 1760 house on the corner, there are several other houses near this intersection that reportedly contain log cabins from that early settlement time period. One of these likely used the flat area of the field behind 72 Gilbert Street, because it contains the most fertile land in this area.

If tales of native American occupation up until close to this time are true, then it may also have been fairly recently reforested and thus relatively easy to clear, another reason the land may have been in use early on, during the time when slavery still existed here. This taking over of native farming areas was a common pattern in early European settlement. All the "fields" towns in New England like Springfield, Greenfield, and Westfield were places where European settlers encountered areas that until recently had still been worked by natives.

The first European settlement here was started by Methodists coming to the area about 1750-1760. It extended from Dorrs Corners down Ashgrove Road towards Black Hole Hollow. It is known that they had slaves because in May 1873 Thomas B. Ashton published in the paper the records of slave purchases made around 1790 by one of his ancestors, James Ashton. This was done just after the civil war in response to attempts that were being made at the time to white wash northern history of its slave-holding past. He wanted people to know that slavery was indeed a part of history even here in New York. As of the time of this writing, the Ashton family still lives in their eponymous Ashgrove, on the same land they have owned since about 1750.

From the History of Washington County we also know that there is a slave graveyard in Ashgrove, in the area where the first church was built, now only a privately owned grave yard. This and much more information about slavery in the area is available in Dave Thornton's "Up from Slavery in the Cambridge Valley".

I make a point of visiting Salem Bedeau once in a while. He was a slave, freed in 1810. In later life he took care of the graveyard on North Park Street, now just north of the Walgreens. Perhaps because he was its caretaker, he was allowed to be buried there, way in the back on the right side.

Cambridge Plow Factory

The factory is not on the property but certainly a prominent presence for most of its history, and so deserves a mention. It was built around 1860 after the railroad had come to town and Solomon Warner and Hiram Lovejoy's plow-making company was taking off. It was started as a factory that built stoves (briefly) and then the world-famous Cambridge All-Steel Plow. This was one of the first plows capable of breaking the very thick sods in the midwest, thus opening up that area to larger scale agriculture.

The factory was powered by water, which was fed over to it on a wooden sluiceway from an artificial pond across the stream from the factory. The pond itself was filled by pipe or other means from further upstream. The remains of the pond and sluice are still visible behind the factory.

Another development that made it possible to locate the factory here was the invention of the Jonval low-head turbine in 1837, and its introduction in the US about 1850. This type of turbine could power the factory with only a 5-8 feet water drop. Previously, mills needed a considerably larger drop.

After the last incarnation of the Cambridge Plow Company went out of business around 1919, the factory was used to manufacture various other products, including from 1940 onward distributor caps, and until the 1990s also ignition coils. It is now owned by someone renovating it for use as an event venue.

There were quite a few other mills nearby, for grinding grain and making other products, including also more buildings on Furnace Lane. It's hard to imagine just what this area looked like during the time when all these factories were active, but it is likely that life on the farm here was considerably less green and less quiet. Much more detail is available in Dave Thornton's book "Cambridge Steel Plow and Farm Tools".

Sugar Maple Elegy

In closing, I'll include a history that I wrote for the large sugar maple tree that once stood in the front yard. This is the same tree for which a cross section "biscuit" is included in the museum. I wrote this at the time we had to take it down, in the same spirit as this document and the museum. Some of the dates are not quite right, but close enough:

Today we witnessed the sad demise of the old sugar maple in front of the house, after its slow decline in recent years. I counted the rings and found that it started growing in 1840. Ironically, today's Cambridge is in many ways much more like it was in 1840 than it was at the peak of its prosperity halfway through that time. Here's a brief history.

In 1840, Martin van Buren was president until late in the year, when he failed to gain reelection because he was blamed for an 1837 economic panic caused by land speculation. At the height of the bubble, an acre of land in the impossibly remote Mississippi valley was worth more than an acre in Manhattan. When the bubble burst and the economy crashed, there was much anti-immigrant sentiment and immigration was restricted for a while.

Some things apparently never change, but many other things have. For example, Martin van Buren's primary language was Dutch, as was still the case for many that lived in the Hudson Valley at the time, and until about 1880. (However, in Cambridge you might have been more likely to hear Scottish!)

It wasn't until 10 years later that the railroad came to Cambridge, so at this time our farm was still very small, closer to a subsistence operation than anything else, with a very long trek to bring its products to market. There was no indoor plumbing here for another 100 years. When we bought the house, there were still 1943 newspapers in the privy!

This tree saw the development of just about every modern technology that we have... in fact, in 1840 the first US electric journal was published, with the odd name of "The Electro-Magnet, and Mechanics Intelligencer".

But perhaps even more dramatically, our tree saw massive social change. In 1840, the US still had slavery. Even in this northern area slavery was finally abolished only 13 years before the tree started growing. However, the anti-slavery movement was well underway, and nearby houses (but not ours, as far as we know) were active on the Underground Railroad, the secret network used to smuggle escaped slaves to Canada and freedom.

Anti-slavery conventions at this time often led to clashes between pro-slavery and anti-slavery mobs. For example in 1837, a pro-slavery mob killed Elijah P. Lovejoy in Illinois and he became a martyr of the anti-slavery movement.

Lovejoy is coincidentally also the name of the man who, in 1860, built the foundry across the field from our house. This used the then-recently developed low-head turbine technology, that could generate enough power to run a factory with a relatively small vertical water drop. The facility was eventually used to manufacture the Cambridge Steel Plow, which is the plow that made it possible to break the thick prairie sods and opened up the Midwest to farming.

Other manufacturing operations came to town as well, including the Rice Seed Company, which as part of its seed packet business created extensive and beautiful test gardens south of the village. The Great Cambridge Fair was held almost year-round from the late 1800's until World War II. Many large hotels were built to accommodate visitors to the fair and other local attractions. Farming was a relatively lucrative business. The Mary McClellan Hospital opened in 1919. With these things came periods of considerable prosperity and growth.

But then the fair was closed, the hotels shut down, manufacturing started to move overseas, the railroad stopped running, farming became an automated tight-margin business that employed far fewer people, and finally in 2002 the hospital was closed as well.

These changes were devastating for the local economy. In many ways, Cambridge is right back where it was in 1840, when our tree started its life. It's a quiet and relatively insignificant rural place that many think is just too far from anywhere. (But it is nevertheless loved by nearly all those that are lucky enough to live here!)

It would be interesting to see what Cambridge will be like in 178 years. Meanwhile, we have a lot of wood to split and stack, and hopefully a little that we can saw up for a few small woodworking projects by which we can remember this significant tree.

The End!